



BOOK REVIEW

Hua, Z. (2019). *Exploring intercultural communication: Language in action* (2nd ed.). Routledge.

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This text explores intercultural communication across various scenarios where language is a key to everyday interactions. It covers both practical issues and theoretical approaches within the field of intercultural communication. There are three main parts, covering 12 chapters. In Part I, the author initially addresses various contexts of intercultural communication by providing insight into potential challenges. In Part II, the discussion leads to theoretical explanations of culture and intercultural communication. Finally, Part III discusses intercultural communication more thoroughly, examining how language influences individuals' thoughts and worldviews. This section also explores theories of culture and cultural identities.

The first part of the book includes “*Intercultural Communication in Everyday Life*” which is divided into five chapters. The author begins Chapter 1 with intercultural communication within the language classroom. This section includes the role of culture in language learning and differences in learners' preferred learning styles such as rote learning and passive learning approaches between East and West. Moreover, the discussion involves the facts and factors contributing to levels of students' participation in a multicultural classroom. In Chapter 2, the author explores the dynamic nature of intercultural interactions in the workplace, particularly in business meetings, small talk, and humor. This chapter provides a brief overview of the general characteristics of workplace diversity and examines how small talk and humor function differently in promoting social cohesion. Chapter 3 focuses on the influence of culture in the business context, primarily within the two contexts of advertising and negotiation strategies. In advertising strategies, the topic covers a wide range of cultural differences in terms of the use of slogans, styles of advertisements, and language choices. Then, the author addresses the differences in rhetoric and conversational styles when making negotiations in international business. In contrast, Chapter 4 explains the experiences of cultural differences between host culture and home culture among migrant families.

Additionally, this chapter discusses whether language and cultural differences impact emotional communication in intercultural marriages as well as the choice of language use and practices among multilingual families and bilingual children. Chapter 5 illustrates intercultural communication in the contexts of studying abroad and tourism. The author highlights common issues such as culture shock in a new environment, often followed by cultural adaptation and the process of establishing social contact with the host culture.

The second part discusses “*Developing Intercultural Communicative Competence*”. This part consists of four chapters. In Chapter 6, the author begins exploring different styles of communication in specific cultures including “high versus low context” by Hall (1976). The discussion, then, extends to the notions of certain cultural aspects such as the level of politeness and directness, and non-verbal cues (e.g., the space and length of gap) in conversational contexts. Next, Chapter 7 describes factors contributing to turbulence in intercultural communication. The author initially defines what turbulence refers to and then identifies the factors contributing to these issues. The turbulence in communication means difficulties encountered when conversational counterparts fail to understand their intended meanings, which then causes consequences such as disagreement, confusion, or resentment. These issues extend beyond merely misunderstanding and miscommunication. In fact, they are all caused by a variety of factors, including “symbolic power”, “pragmatic mismatch”, “clash of styles”, “mismatch in schemas and cultural stereotypes”, and “mismatch in contextualization and framing”. All these elements are defined by various scholars, including Kramsch (2016), who described symbolic power as the ability to shape thoughts and perceptions of others through subtle acts such as language and cultural practices. Pragmatic mismatches normally occur when participants have difficulty interpreting the meanings in conversations. Another factor in the clash of styles was described by Bailey (1997), highlighting the differences in conversational styles between people from different cultural groups. In addition, turbulence may also arise from a mismatch in schemas and cultural stereotypes as well as in contextualization and framing. Nishida (2005) noted cultural schemas as the perceived knowledge of the cultural traits and values in other cultural groups whereas a mismatch in contextualization and framing occurs when participants are required to contextualize through verbal and non-verbal cues in interactions (Gumperz, 1992).

In Chapter 8, the author continues discussing factors contributing to successful intercultural communication. This section initially discusses Giles’ (1973) Communication

Accommodation Theory (CAT), which focuses on the behavioral changes among people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds when they interact with one another. The discussion further continues to adjustment strategies such as the roles of negotiation and interpreters to achieve the goal of intercultural communication among encounters. Chapter 9 explains the theories on how to enhance intercultural communication competence. The author suggests some theories, including Hymes's (1972) model of communicative competence, which was further divided into six elements: "linguistic competence", "sociolinguistic competence", "discourse competence", "strategic competence", "social-cultural competence", and "social competence" (Ek, 1986); Byram's (1997) Intercultural Competence, defining it as the ability to communicate with people from different cultures without necessarily requiring proficiency in their second language; and Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC), which indicates the ability to interact with people from different cultural backgrounds using the target language as the medium of communication. The author further discusses relevant approaches for intercultural teaching and learning within the context of foreign languages in Chapter 9.

Finally, the last part illustrates "*Understanding Intercultural Communication Critically*". This part contains three chapters. Chapter 10 primarily shows how the three elements: language, culture, and thought are closely intertwined. This section begins with a brief overview of "The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis" by Whorf (1956), which explains how language shapes individuals' thinking and worldviews. Then, the author discusses how the two languages impact their thoughts and utterances among bilingual speakers. The next section on "Theories of culture" in Chapter 11 illustrates definitions of the term, "culture" by various classic studies, including Samovar et al. (1998) and Hofstede (2001). According to Samovar et al. (1998), culture means "the deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, actions, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, and artifacts acquired by a group of people" (p. 36). The authors described culture as comprising various components which can be acquired. However, Hofstede's (2001) theory seems to focus on the more abstract values of each particular group, defining culture as "the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another. Culture in this sense includes values; systems of values are a core element of culture" (pp. 9-10). Basically, theories of culture generally share fundamental values that differentiate one group from another. With these clear definitions of culture provided, the

discussion leads to several methodological approaches for cultural analysis, namely: “interpretive approach: culture as semiotic” – exploring the deeper meanings beyond actions and behaviors (Geertz, 1973); “action approach: culture as a process” – focusing on the dynamic nature of culture and its evolution over time (Holliday, 1999, Fay, 1996); and “critical approach: culture as power and ideological struggle” – power differences within and between the groups (Halualani & Nakayama, 2010). All of them highlight the complex nature of culture and view it differently in each context. Lastly, Chapter 12 looks at the interlink between cultural identities and language practices. Among the multiple types of identities, cultural identity is multi-faceted and encompasses dynamic elements such as race, nationality, gender, and so on. This discussion examines the use of language and its relationship to identity projection in intercultural interactions.

Overall, this book provides a variety of theoretical explanations in various contexts. It is, therefore, a valuable resource for students and lecturers who specialize in language and intercultural communication studies or TESOL, as well as those with an interest in communication studies. In addition, the inclusion of case studies helps readers visualize practical issues on a global scale which enhances their understanding of intercultural communication in everyday scenarios. This text will also help readers better understand communication issues and foster effective interactions in an increasingly globalized world.

Author

Pa Pa Soe completed her bachelor’s degree in English at the University of Monywa, Myanmar. She is currently studying for an MA in English Language Studies and Teaching at the National Institute of Development Administration (NIDA). Her MA thesis focuses on the experiences of Myanmar students during their study abroad programs in Thai higher education institutions. Her research interests include English language teaching, intercultural and cross-cultural communication, and the field of education in Myanmar.